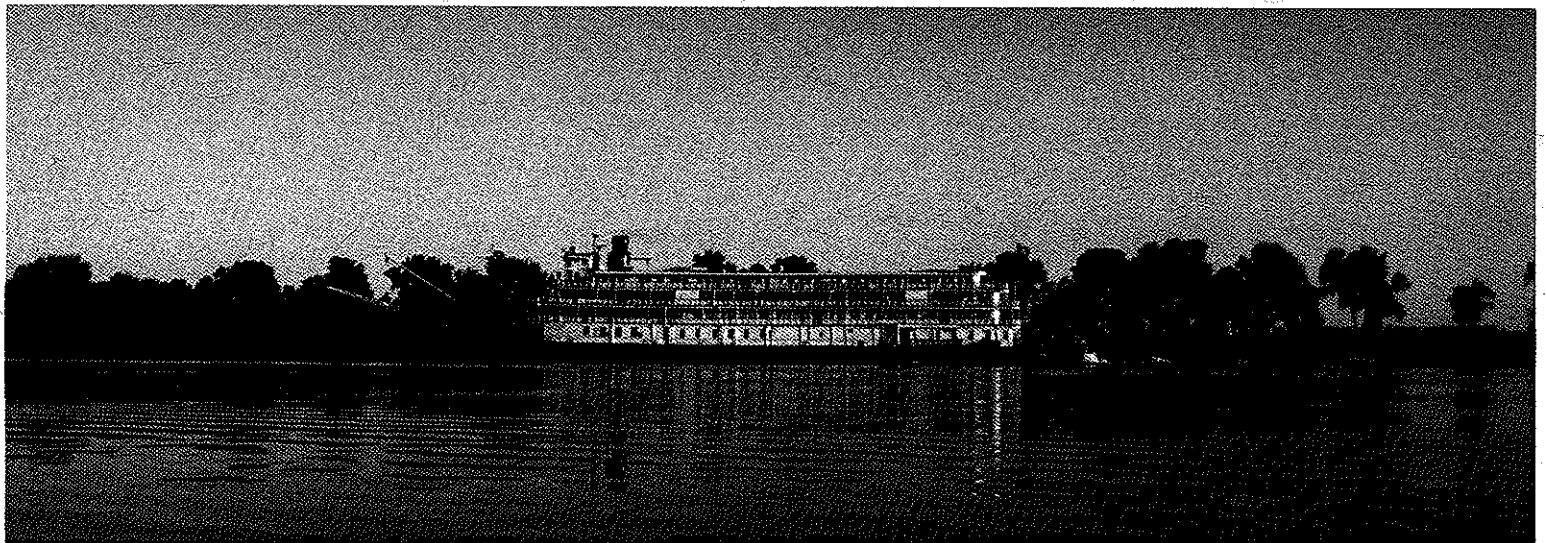


*Project  
Summary*

# What's A River Worth?

A Valuation Survey of the Ohio River Corridor

A project jointly sponsored by:  
The Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission  
The National Park Service  
The Ohio River Basin Commission



## Economy

# What's A River Worth?



The Ohio River is many things to many people. It has been an important economic and cultural force since humans first settled near its banks. Today, the river provides drinking water to nearly three million people and water for industrial processing, serves as a major transportation artery and supports several major metropolitan areas. The river also provides the setting for recreational opportunities, historical sites and unique natural areas.

An abundant supply of water for industrial processing and power, inexpensive river transportation, and plentiful raw materials make the Ohio River Corridor a desirable location for many industries. Companies dealing in bulk commodities like coal, grain and petroleum, while not necessarily located

on the riverbank, still rely on river transportation for goods and supplies. Besides the obvious river-bound industries, many non-traditional businesses and property developers find the riverfront increasingly attractive because of its scenic and recreational opportunities. In short, the Ohio River supports a diverse economic base that, in turn, supports much of the populations of the Corridor and significantly influences the nation's economic health.

### Primary Economy

There are over 35,000 people employed in more than 600 businesses whose jobs and companies directly depend on the Ohio River. People in these professions operate barges, work in marinas and power generating facilities, load and unload cargo, and transport sightseers.

The 72 counties that border the Ohio River form a corridor almost 1,000 miles long. This booklet provides an overview of the economics, cultural and natural resources contained within this corridor and sustained by the Ohio River.

Some counties rely more heavily on the river than others, especially if they are less diversified economically. In some instances a county's major employer is river-dependent, such as Trimble County, Kentucky, where nearly 75 percent of the work force is employed at a power generating facility.

The heart of the river-based economy is barge transportation. Barge traffic has increased 50 percent over the last decade. In 1993, 235 million tons of commodities were transported on the Ohio River, including petroleum, sand, gravel, grains, chemicals and

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***There are more than 35,000 people employed in more than 600 businesses whose jobs directly depend on the Ohio River.***

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coal. In contrast, 30 million tons of commodities were transported on the entire Great Lakes system. Marinas are another example of river-based economic activity. Nearly 200 marinas on the Ohio River employ approximately 1,500 people with an annual payroll of \$3 million.

## Secondary Economy

There are many industries that, while not completely dependent on the river or located near the river, are made more profitable by access to it. Most of this type of economic activity involves bulk products shipped by barge. In the riverfront counties alone, nearly 4,000 companies deal with various bulk commodities and depend on the river for transport. Often companies have both shipping and receiving facilities on the river, as with refineries and steel mills. Over 150,000 people work in these industries in the 72 Corridor counties. Other estimates, which include tributaries, link as many as 358,000 jobs with water-borne commerce.

## ***Riverfront Enhancement***

### **Louisville, Kentucky--**

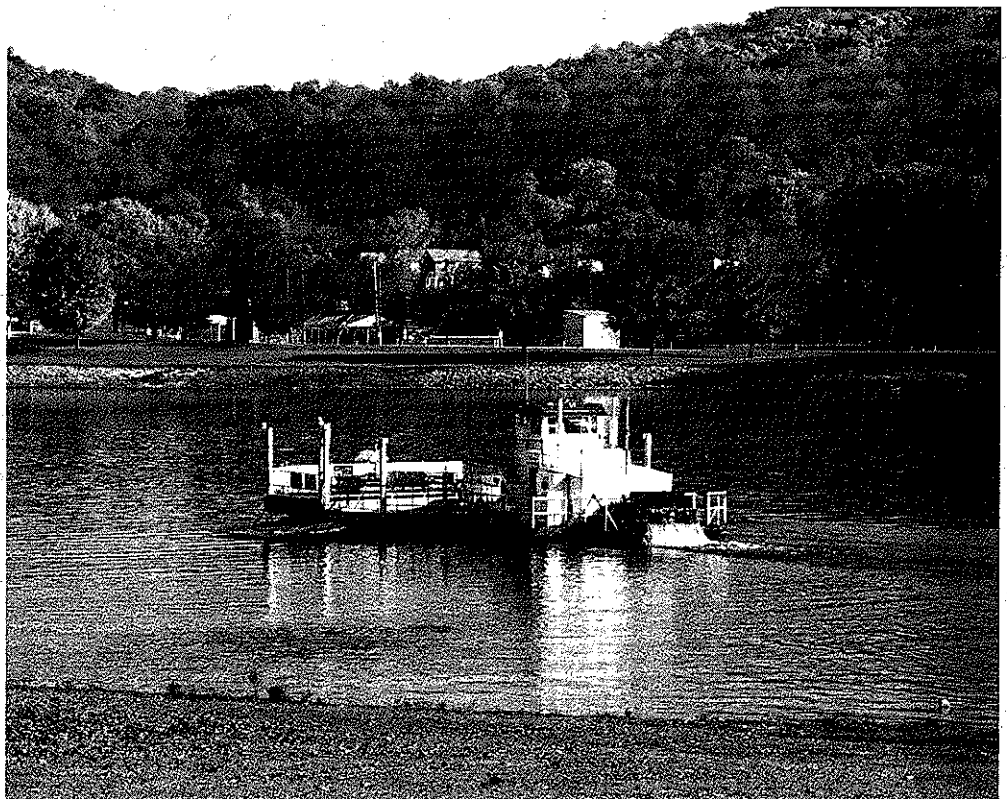
River Fields, a Louisville-based river conservation organization, and the local sewer district have joined forces to develop an Ohio River Corridor Master Plan. This plan will guide future public and private economic development, investment, and preservation of the river in Jefferson County to protect the unique natural, scenic, historical and recreational quality of the 37-mile local river corridor

### **New Richmond, Ohio--**

New Richmond has recently established the Festival Park on the Ohio River with approximately 53 acres and almost one mile of river frontage. A newly-completed grass amphitheater close to the river will be used for festivals and concerts. The city also plans to develop recreation fields and a boat dock. New Richmond expects the park to bring more tourists and business to the city.

### **Wheeling, West Virginia--**

The Wheeling Heritage Project is a major effort co-sponsored by the city and the National Park Service to preserve, restore, and interpret Wheeling's historic past. The city plans to obtain Congressional designation as a National Heritage Area and spend \$50-60 million to improve the downtown, which it hopes will generate over \$100 million in private investment.



## Recreation/Tourism

# Corridor Offers Cruises, Special Events, and Regattas

Almost 56 million people live within a four-hour drive of the Corridor, and more than 130 million live within eight hours. The many opportunities for tourism and recreation provide an important source of income for riverfront communities. In the Ohio River Corridor, approximately 10,000 businesses with 150,000 full-and part-time employees cater to out-of-town customers or offer services that appeal to visitors. On average 7 to 8 percent of all employees and businesses in the Corridor are involved in the tourism and recreation industries selected for this survey.

Because many parts of the corridor do not actively promote tourism, few estimates of the full impact are available. Below are samples of the cultural and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors that contribute to the economy of the region.

### Riverboat Cruises

Over one million passengers travel on riverboats each year. According to owner statistics, approximately 120,000 people cruised on the West Virginia Belle in 1992; as many as 750,000 passengers cruised on the Gateway Clipper fleet in Pittsburgh; 140,000 people rode the Belle of Louisville and over 250,000 people travelled on B&B Riverboats in Covington, Kentucky.

### Riverboat Casinos

Riverboat gambling has come to the Ohio River in recent years, creating both employment opportunities and controversy. When Players Riverboat Casino opened in Metropolis, Illinois in 1992, it instantly became the county's largest employer, producing a payroll of over \$12 million annually. Every day the casino generates more than \$13,000 in revenue for the city of 8,000.

*"More than one  
million people travel  
on riverboats along  
the Ohio River each  
year"*



## Special Events

Nearly 1,000 festivals and community events are held each year in the Ohio River Corridor, about half of which are river-related thematically or held at riverside locations. While the full economic impact of special events is unknown, they can have a significant benefit to local economies, as described below. From these examples it could be estimated that river-based special events generate as much as \$100 million annually throughout the corridor.

### **—*Evansville Freedom Festival***

This annual festival in Evansville, Indiana takes place from mid-June to the Fourth of July. Its main attraction is the "Thunder on the Ohio" hydroplane races. Event organizers estimate that the Freedom Festival generates \$3 million for the local economy.

### **—*Tall Stacks***

Cincinnati, Ohio hosted the Tall Stacks celebration in 1988 and 1992. In 1992, the event, which features the steamboating era, attracted almost 1.5 million people. Visitors spent \$26 million, resulting in a total economic boost of \$40 million for the Cincinnati area.

### **—*Tri-State Fair and Regatta***

This event is shared by Ashland, Kentucky; Huntington, West Virginia; and Ironton, Ohio. Highlights of the festival include Ohio River boat races and a variety of musical presentations. Event organizers estimate that the 1993 event attracted almost 300,000 people and generated nearly \$30 million for the Tri-State area economy.

## Outdoor Pursuits

There are hundreds of places to enjoy the natural beauty of the Ohio River Corridor, including 41 state parks, recreation and resort areas, and two National Forests—Hoosier and Wayne. Park land covers more than 150,000 acres, and the lakes and streams within these parks cover nearly an equal area. Woodall's 1993 Campground Directory lists 75 camping areas with over 8,000 campsites in the corridor, but there are many more public and private campgrounds not listed.

Boating access to the Ohio River is widely available. There are over 450 public and private facilities and boat ramps, including 190 marinas, along the river and the lower reaches of its tributaries. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, about 17,500 recreational lockages take place on the Ohio River annually.

Nearly 1,000 miles of highway within the Corridor have been designated as scenic or historic by state governments or travel organizations. These include the Ohio River Road, the Lincoln National Trail and the George Rogers Clark Trail. Several historic railroads in the area provide yet another means to enjoy the natural beauty of the Ohio River Corridor.

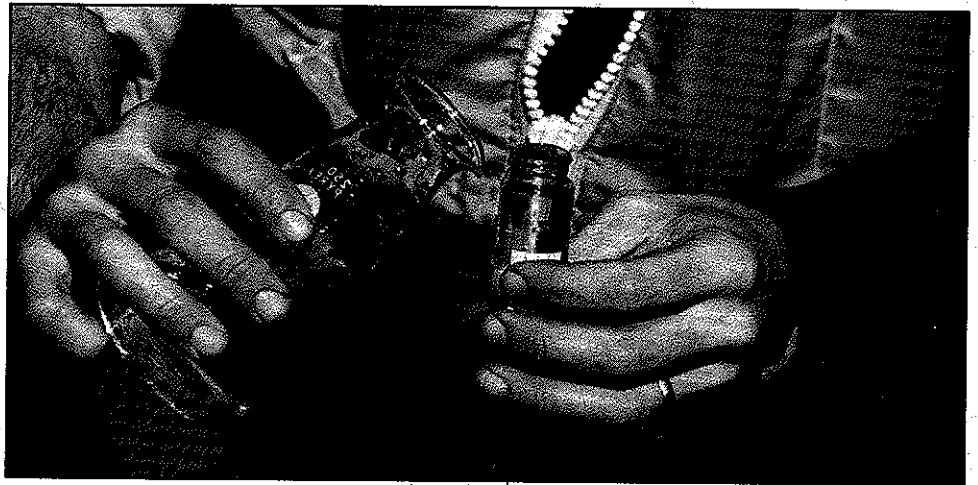




## Environment

# The Ohio River-- A Multi-Faceted Resource

The economic well-being of much of the Corridor depends on the river's environmental health. Industry has been asked to increase its sensitivity to environmental issues during a period of growing overseas competition and economic restructuring. In addition, a society demanding more recreational opportunities and an economy dependent on tourism are pushing the limits of the Ohio River as a multi-faceted resource. The partnerships forged among these varied interests must continue to create an enlightened plan to balance the uses of the river for all.

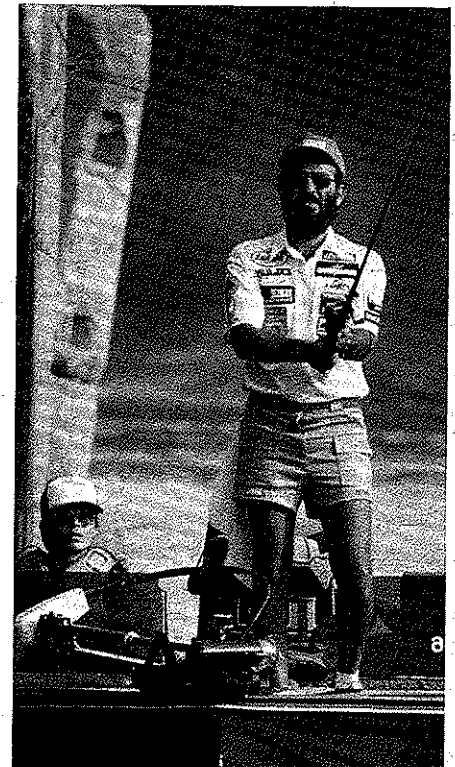
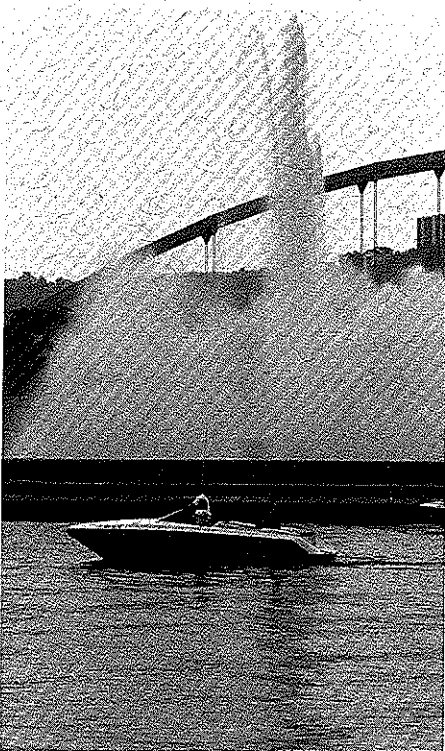


## Water Quality

In the early 20th century, lack of industrial and municipal sewage treatment led to poor water quality and epidemics of water-borne diseases. The public, including civic and business leaders, recognized that the river must be cleaned up to improve public health and economic development.

The construction of sewage treatment facilities and the regulation of industrial dischargers greatly improved water quality, making the Corridor a better place to live and do business. Water pollution control effort are now turning to other sources of pollution, such as runoff from agricultural and urban areas, acid mine drainage and combined sewer overflows.

Water quality improvements are having ramifications throughout the Corridor.



## Natural Areas

Several areas in the Corridor have been set aside as refuges and conservation areas. These lands include some of the finest remnants of the Ohio River Valley's natural heritage. Preserving these areas is important not only for wildlife and land, but also to educate the public about their significance. Following are some examples of unique natural areas.

### *—Ohio River Islands*

This refuge, established in 1990, encompasses 38 islands from Shippingport, PA to Manchester, OH. Located along 362 miles of river, it comprises 3,500 acres of prime habitat. The mission of the refuge is to concentrate on preserving, restoring and enhancing the diversity and abundance of fish and wildlife populations characteristic of the Ohio River.

*—The Falls of the Ohio State Park* in Clarksville, IN is a unique and nationally significant area. This 68-acre park lies within the Falls of the Ohio National Conservation area, which includes 1,404 acres of federally protected land and water. Of special interest are the 375 million year old fossil beds, found on 200 acres of exposed bedrock in the Ohio River. More than 600 species of fossils have been identified at the Falls, two-thirds of which are new discoveries. A 16,000 square foot interpretive center has been built to educate the public and serve as a research center.

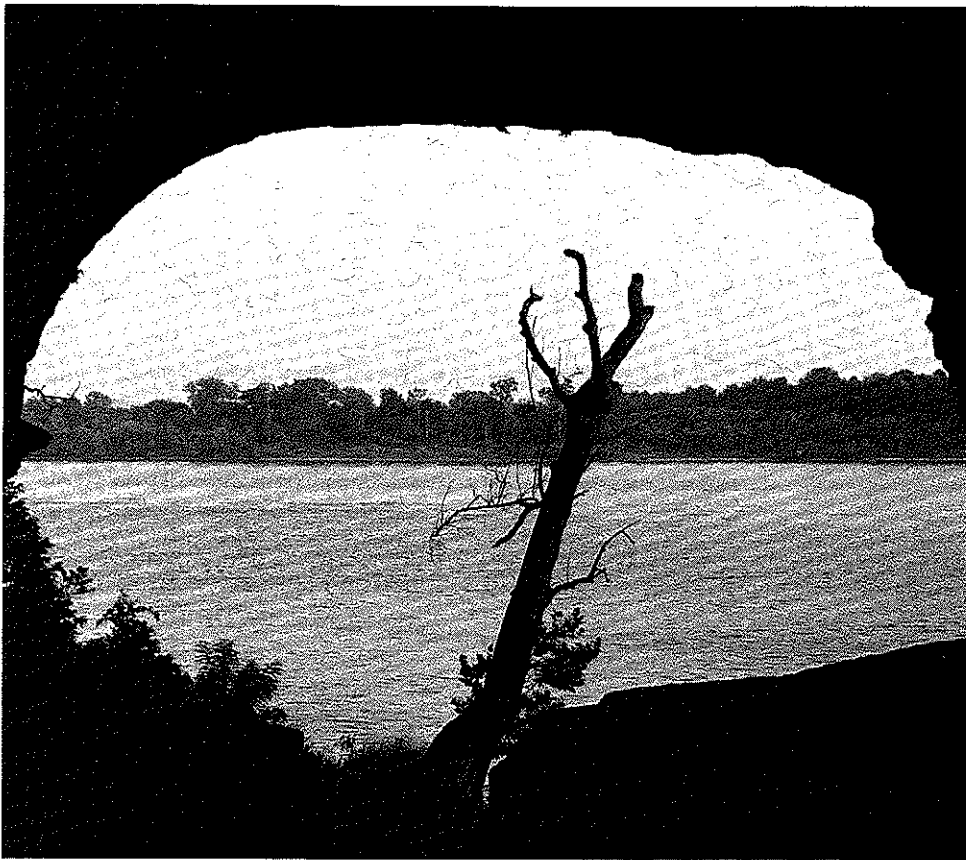
### *—Green Bottom*

The Green Bottom area in West Virginia is owned by the state Department of Natural Resources and was developed in 1989 as a wildlife management area. Previously used by prehistoric Native Americans as a hunting site, it now supports agriculture, forests, wetlands and open water resources.

## Fish and Wildlife

The diverse habitats in and around the Ohio River support a variety of wildlife. Common mammals include white-tailed deer, opossum, raccoon, mink, muskrat, skunk, and beaver. Many species of birds, including shorebirds and migratory waterfowl, use the Corridor's resources. The Corridor is also home to several endangered or threatened species, including bald eagle, osprey, least weasel, green salamander and bowfin fish.

Currently, 119 species of fish are listed in the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission's (ORSANCO) data base. While this number will probably never reach the historical number of 160 species, it does suggest that fish are beginning to return to their previous ranges because of improved water quality. More than 70 species of mussels have been found in the Ohio River. Dredging, over-harvesting, and competition from introduced species are having a serious impact on native mussel populations. ORSANCO is the water pollution control agency for the Ohio River and has been conducting biological studies on the Ohio River since 1968.



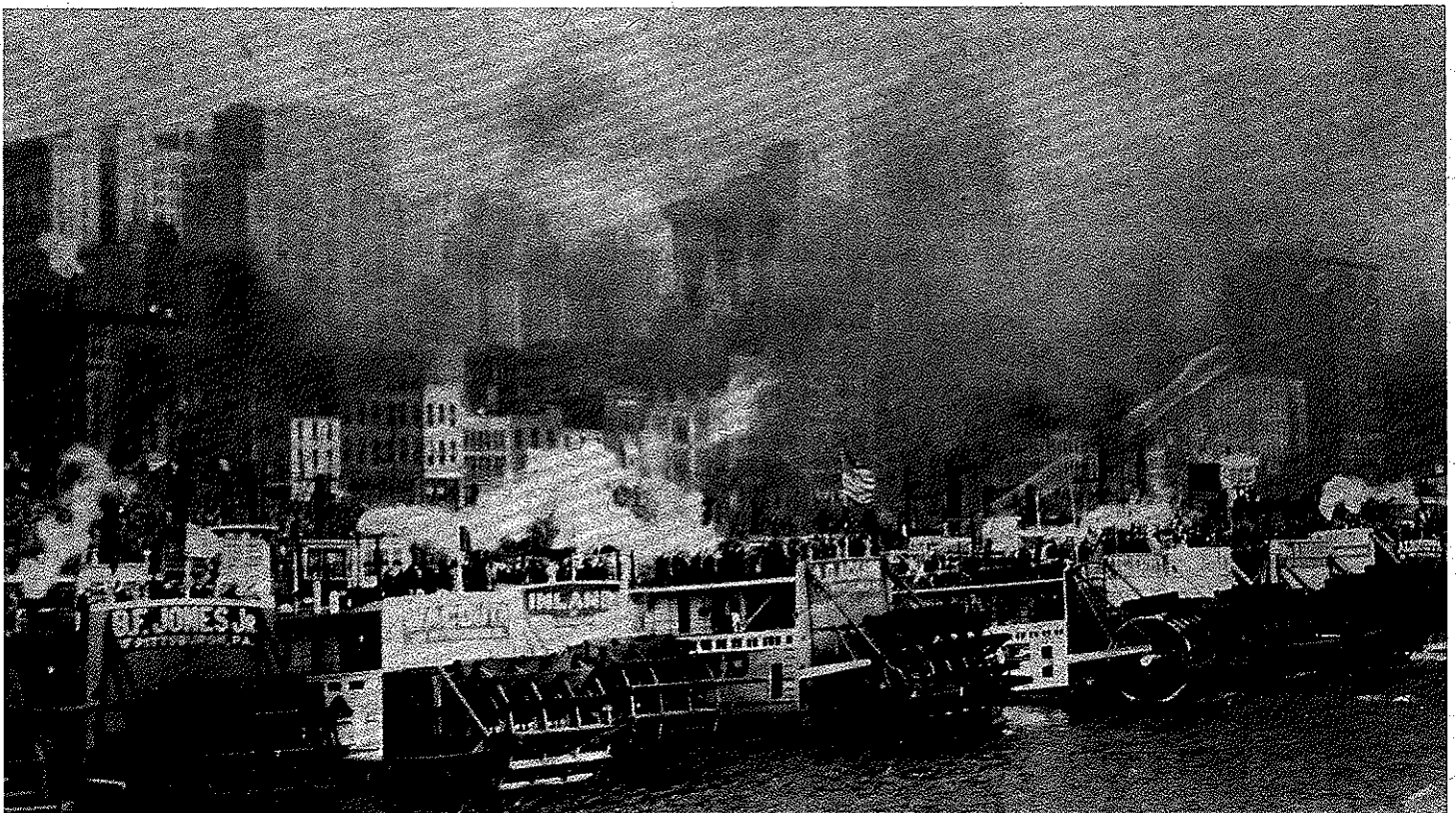
## Historical and Cultural Assets

# River Valley Rich In History

The Ohio River Corridor has played a central role in the settlement patterns, history, economic and cultural development of the United States. The first people known to inhabit the Ohio River Valley were the Mound Builders, including the Adena, Hopewell, Fort Ancient and Mississippian cultures. In the 18th Century, the valley was the site of much warfare over trading rights, as well as rights to the land and river itself. Later, the Ohio River became a key transportation route, leading to the establishment of such cities as Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville. Recognizing the potential of historic tourism, many towns now



actively promote their culture and architecture. There are approximately 150 designated historic districts in the Ohio River Corridor. These may be residential, commercial or thematic, such as the round and polygon barns of West Virginia Historic District. In addition, 1885 buildings and sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Finally, 32 sites in the Corridor have been singled out for their unique place in American history and designated as National Historic Landmarks. There are also hundreds of museums in Ohio River communities.





# Agencies Sponsoring the Corridor Survey

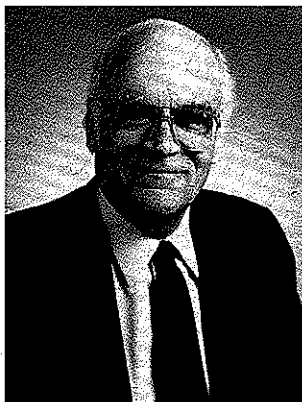


"Since its formation 25 years ago, the Ohio River Basin Commission has sought to enhance the water and related land resources of the basin. In the 1970s this was accomplished through a series of plans for regions within the basin. Several of these dealt directly with the area encompassed by the Ohio River Corridor. Parts of these plans were devoted to the economics, cultural and natural resources of the basin. "What's A River Worth?" is a natural follow up to these plans. It is an excellent first step in updating information about the Ohio River's importance to the citizens of the basin. It is the hope of ORBC commissioners that this document will provide the impetus for a more in-depth study of the river and its effects on the basin's resources. The Commission is pleased to have provided financial and staff support for the survey."

*L. Eli McCoy*  
*Chairman*

"In 1948 the governors of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia united to sign the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Compact. It was their desire to improve water quality in the Valley for future generations. Since the signing of the Compact, many factors have contributed to cleaner streams in the Valley. However, no factor has been more important than the commitment of the states, federal agencies, local governments and private interests working together to improve the Ohio River through the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO). ORSANCO is pleased to have been a part of this very important survey on the Ohio River Corridor. It is hoped that this survey will show a need for further research on the value of the Ohio River Valley and illustrate the importance of environmental stewardship of the Ohio River."

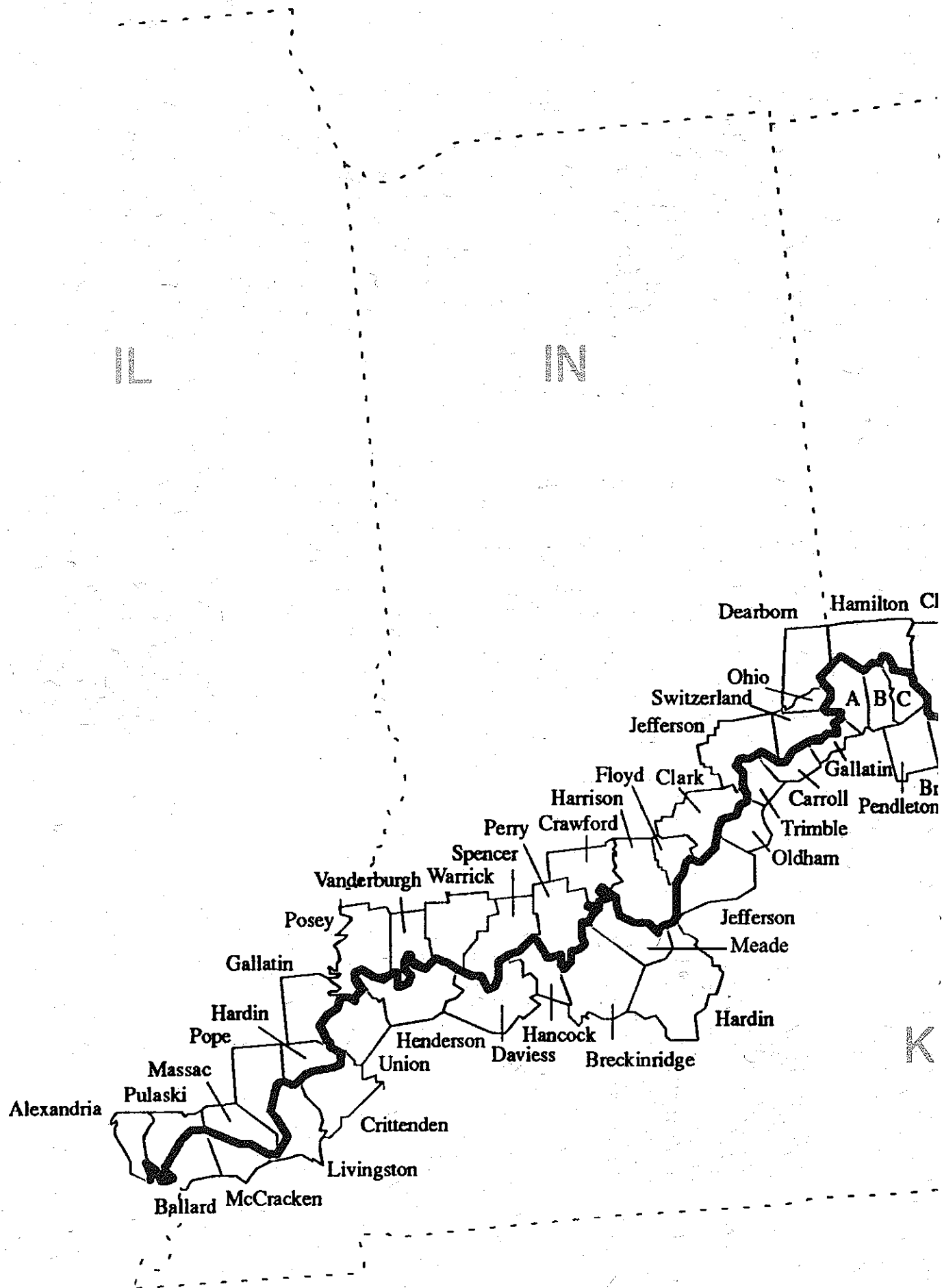
*Ronald Potesta, Chairman*  
*1994-1995*



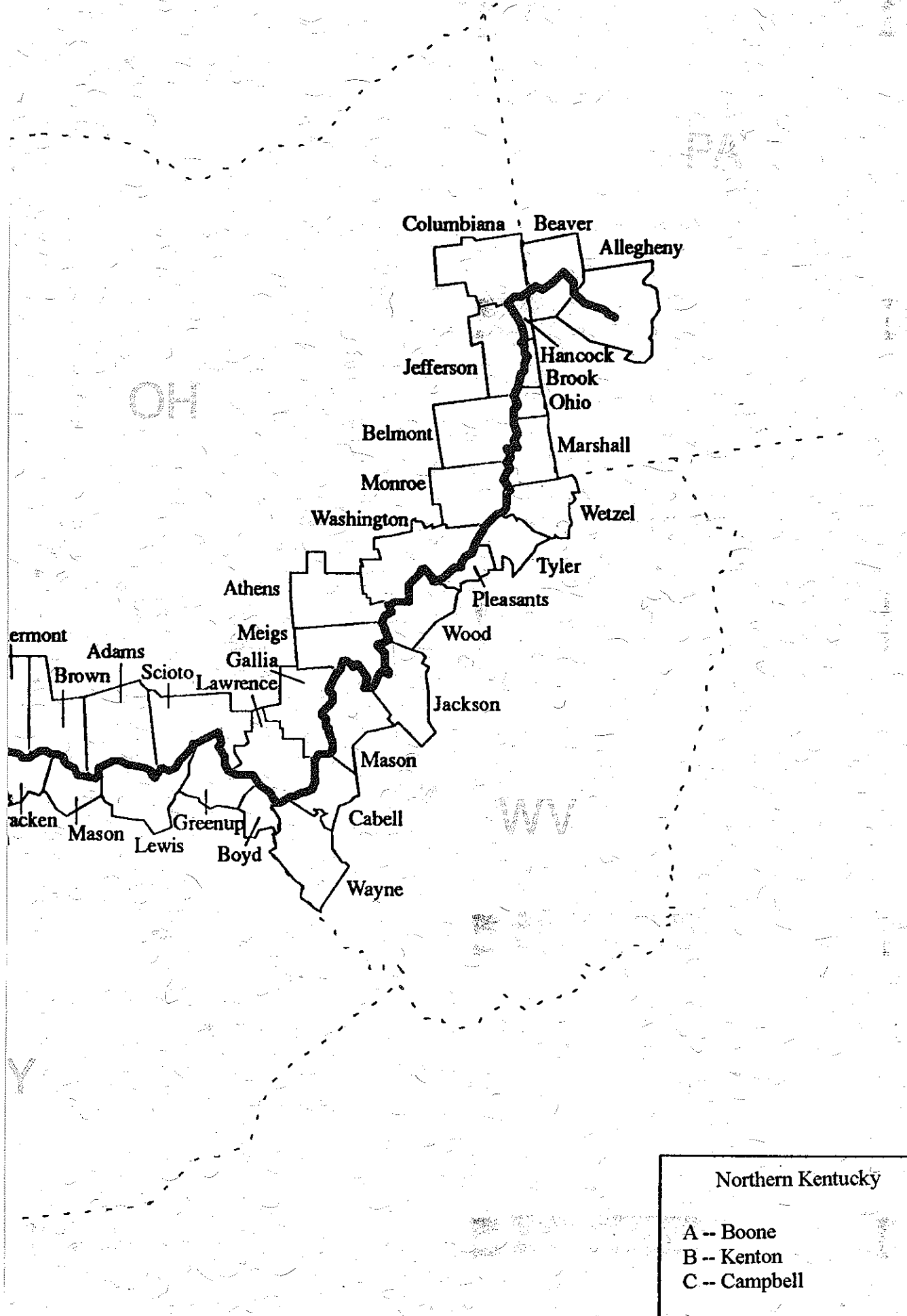
"As the great conical mounds of the Adena reflected in its waves, the Ohio River was the spine of Hopewellian civilization at the time when the Romans were withdrawing from Britain and King Arthur was doing his best to sustain some civility there. The Ohio was the great avenue to the West for Europeans who had come across the Appalachians. De Soto and Juan de Pardo came upon its headwaters long before the settlement of Jamestown. The Ohio was the gathering basin for pork and salt, then for coal and iron and today carries a more complex and curious potion of history than any other river in America. And it remains the beautiful river it was for the French and for the National Park Service which is proud to be a partner in an endeavor to do right by the river."

*Roger Kennedy, Director*  
*U.S. National Park Service*

# Counties Within The



# Ohio River Corridor





For a complete copy of this report contact: The Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission,  
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